



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Don't Let the Flu Catch You by Surprise!

Prevention and Control of Influenza: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) 2007

Recorded: July 10, 2007; posted: July 13, 2007

[Announcer] *This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.*

Ana: Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly broadcast of the MMWR, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Ana Benson, filling in for your host, Matthew Reynolds. Every year, many people become ill with seasonal influenza. Although it is a common illness, it can also be very serious – especially for older people, young children, and those with certain health conditions. There are steps you can take that help you and those close to you avoid getting the flu. An independent group of medical experts that advises CDC has updated their recommendations for preventing flu: who should get vaccinated, when, and why. Today, I will be talking with Dr. Anthony Fiore, a research physician with the CDC Immunization Center. Dr. Fiore is the lead author of the recently published recommendations on influenza prevention and control and he's here to tell us more about that. Welcome to the show, Dr. Fiore.

[Dr. Anthony Fiore] Thank you.

[Ana Benson] Dr. Fiore, I haven't had the flu for several years, but I know it can be pretty awful. Now, I'm sure our listeners would like to learn what they can do to avoid getting the flu. I understand that recommendations on preventing influenza have recently been updated, so can you give us the latest on flu prevention?

[Dr. Anthony Fiore] Yes, the recommendations have been updated, Ana, and that's part of the annual update that's given for influenza vaccination recommendations. Because of the need to change the vaccine each year, we issue new recommendations each year. These recommendations apply to the 2007-2008 season. For this coming flu season, perhaps the most important thing that we want to bring to the forefront is that anyone who wants to be vaccinated against influenza can be vaccinated - can go to a physician or a health care practitioner of some sort, get their vaccine, and be protected from influenza, and potentially protect their close contacts and loved ones from getting influenza, also.

[Ana Benson] Now, let me be sure I understand: we're not talking about the avian influenza that's been in the news in the past few months, are we?

[Dr. Anthony Fiore] No, we're not. This is the seasonal influenza virus that comes around every year, sweeps all over the world during the winter months, and infects a large proportion of the population, anywhere from 5 to 20 percent in most years.

[Ana Benson] Who should get flu shots and when should they get them?

[Dr. Anthony Fiore] There's a long list of persons who should get flu shots. In addition, to anyone who wants to get them, it's most important for persons who are at risk for severe complications of flu and the contacts of these persons to get vaccinated. This would include all children who are anywhere between 6 months and 59 months of age, that is up until their fifth birthday. Children younger than six months can't get flu vaccines because they don't respond well. All persons older than 50 years old, all persons who have a chronic medical condition of some sort, any women who will be pregnant during the influenza season, health care personnel, and of course contacts of any of the above groups, should receive an annual influenza vaccination.

[Ana Benson] Dr. Fiore, my four year old son received a flu shot last year. Does he need another one?

[Dr. Anthony Fiore] In the first year of being vaccinated, a child younger than 9 should get two influenza vaccine shots, because this will provide them with much better protection than just a single shot. For your child who only got one shot in their first year of being vaccinated last year, he should get two shots in this coming year.

[Ana Benson] Should you still get a shot if you're not in a high risk group?

[Dr. Anthony Fiore] Even if you're not in a high risk group, you can still become pretty sick with influenza and you would benefit yourself by getting a shot. But perhaps just as important to some people would be to reduce the spread of influenza viruses in the general population, and thus, indirectly protect people who are more vulnerable to the complications of influenza, who perhaps either can't get the shot or don't respond well to the shot. For example, young infants, elderly persons, persons with chronic illness, or pregnant women. In addition, health care personnel are particularly recommended to get influenza vaccination. We have not done a very good job of getting health care personnel vaccinated. Only about 40 percent of health care workers are vaccinated each year.

[Ana Benson] Tell me - where can people get flu shots if they don't have a family doctor?

[Dr. Anthony Fiore] Well, there are lots of different places one can get a flu shot outside of a doctor's office. Certainly, that might be the first place you would look if you have a long standing relationship with a doctor. However, public health clinics offer shots, often, even places like pharmacies and supermarkets are offering shots these days.

[Ana Benson] Now where can I get more information about the flu vaccine and ways to prevent the flu?

[Dr. Anthony Fiore] Certainly, talking to your health care practitioner is the first place that one might think to start. In addition, local and state public health departments have lots of information about influenza. And finally, one can call 1-800-CDC-INFO or go to our CDC influenza web site at cdc.gov/flu.

[Ana Benson] Well, thank you for taking the time to talk to us today Dr. Fiore.

[Dr. Anthony Fiore] Thank you for allowing me to discuss this.

[Ana Benson] That's it for this week's show. Don't forget to join us next week. Until then, be well. This is Ana Benson for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] *To access the most accurate and relevant health information that affects you, your family and your community, please visit www.cdc.gov.*